

Education Committee Members,

Please do not take this letter and lack of personal appearance as a sign of disinterest or lack of importance. Due to a sick child at home I am unable to attend in person.

My name is Christine Pastore and I am resident of Prospect. I have been working to allow the children of Region 16 to participate in the Waterbury Arts Magnet School for over 4 years. As of today, any student from our district wanting to go to the magnet school is not able. The reason is because Region 16 is not a participating partner of the Waterbury Arts Magnet School.

Waterbury Arts Magnet School, also known as WAMS, enrolls students through a lottery system. 80% of the student population is taken from Waterbury residents and the remaining 20% are filled with neighboring participating districts.

At the start of WAMS, a letter was sent out to several districts asking them to participate in the school. Those that accepted were guaranteed a certain number of chairs to be filled by their interested students. Although Region 16 was interested in participating, they were never invited and excluded from the process.

Some will say that since it is a lottery, anyone can participate. This is untrue. The lottery system takes Waterbury residents first and then participating districts, if any remaining seats are still available, WAMS proceeds to pick students from non-participating districts. Since the beginning of WAMS, there have been students from participating districts that have not gotten in and remain on the waiting list. Therefore, a non-participating district has 0% chance of getting in.

HB-6495 would allow Region 16 students a fair participation in the lottery system- having the same chance of getting in as a student from Naugatuck, another neighboring town of Prospect.

As a Connecticut and tax paying resident, my taxes are used to support the magnet school. All we are asking is that you make it required for magnet schools to include their neighbors. Keeping our kids close to home but still able to experience diversity and alternative education. Unless a school operates solely on private funding, they do not have the right to decide who and who not to include. WAMS is a school funded by the public and should not have the power to decide who should be included. HB-6495 will give direction and balance for all magnet and charter schools.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration into this issue.

Best Regards,

Christine Pastore